

TO: Rural Development State Directors,
Rural Development Managers, and
Community Development Managers

ATTN: Program Directors and State Environmental Coordinators

FROM: James C. Alsop *(Signed by James C. Alsop)*
Acting Administrator
Rural Housing Service

William F. Hagy III *(Signed by William F. Hagy III)*
Acting Administrator
Rural Business-Cooperative Service

SUBJECT: Role of the State Environmental Coordinator and
Recommended Support Structure for Effective Implementation
of the Environmental Requirements of RD Instruction 1940-G

PURPOSE/INTENDED OUTCOME:

Questions have been raised regarding the responsibilities of the State Environmental Coordinators (SECs), and the need for Assistant State Environmental Coordinators (ASECs) and Program Environmental Coordinators (PECs). The purpose of this Administrative Notice (AN) is two-fold. First, this AN will clarify the requirements of RD Instruction 1940-G regarding the appointment of an SEC. Second, it will reiterate previous recommendations that an environmental support structure be established within each State to improve the integration and coordination of environmental policies and procedures within the loan processing and servicing activities of the Rural Housing Service and the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (hereinafter referred to as "Agency").

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS AN:

There is no previous AN on this subject. However, two Unnumbered Letters on this subject were previously issued. The first was by Jill Long Thompson, Under Secretary, Rural Development, on October 13, 1995, in response to recommendations by an Environmental Regulation Task Force, and the second was issued on October 5, 1998.

Expiration Date:
July 31, 2002

Filing Instruction:
Preceding RD Instruction 1940-G

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

Appointment of the State Environmental Coordinator:

RD Instruction 1940-G, §1940.307(a)(2), requires the State Director to appoint one individual to serve as the SEC. This is to be interpreted as one SEC for the entire area under the State Director's jurisdiction, not one SEC per program area. SEC duties generally will require at least 25% of the appointee's time, usually more, and will be considered a major duty. In some States, SEC duties may be full-time. Workload demands will dictate the amount of time needed.

The primary reason that RD Instruction 1940-G requires one SEC is to ensure consistent interpretation and implementation of environmental policies and procedures across all program areas. This is accomplished by requiring the SEC to review the environmental documents prepared for most Agency activities. Another critical role fulfilled by the SEC is that of liaison between the Agency and numerous other federal, state, and local regulatory agencies, as well as the National office, for all environmental compliance issues. The SEC is also responsible for providing the necessary technical assistance and guidance to field office staff, applicants, and their consultants, to achieve environmental compliance in an effective and efficient manner. A detailed list of the SEC's responsibilities is found in §1940.307(b)(1) through (13).

Appointment of Assistant State Environmental Coordinators and Program Environmental Coordinators:

To help fulfill RD Instruction 1940-G's requirements concerning Agency environmental responsibilities, it is recommended that additional duty assignments be made for one ASEC and one or more PECs.

The ASEC and the PECs, with oversight from the SEC, provide guidance on environmental issues within their respective program areas, assist the SEC in providing environmental training to field office staff, and assist field office staff in the preparation of appropriate environmental documents.

In addition, when the SEC is away from the office for scheduled training or leave, the ASEC may act on behalf of the SEC. This ensures that environmental documents requiring the review and signature of the SEC may continue to be processed even in the SEC's absence. An ASEC may also function as a PEC.

In most States, the ASEC or PEC responsibilities should be assigned to an employee as a collateral duty, should not be grade controlling, and should typically constitute less than 25 percent of the employee's time. In some States, the ASEC duties and responsibilities may exceed 25 percent of the employee's time. In these situations, a personnel specialist should review the duties and responsibilities to determine if they impact the overall classification of the employee's position.

Attachments:

The appointment of an SEC, ASEC, or PEC involves: selecting an individual who has the applicable educational and professional qualifications (to the extent practicable), amending the appointee's position description, providing the appointee with appropriate training, evaluating the appointee's performance of environmental duties, and notifying the Program Support Staff (PSS) of the appointment.

To assist in the management of the SEC, ASEC, and PEC positions, the Program Support Staff, in cooperation with the Human Resources, National office, has attached the guidance documents listed below. If you have any questions or comments, contact Sue Wieferich, Program Support Staff, at (202) 720-9647, or e-mail: sue.wieferich@usda.gov.

For the SEC:

- Attachment 1: Amendment to position description
- Attachment 2: Incorporating environmental duties in Performance Work Plans

For the ASEC:

- Attachment 3: Amendment to position description
- Attachment 4: Incorporating environmental duties in Performance Work Plans

For the PEC:

- Attachment 5: Amendment to position description
- Attachment 6: Incorporating environmental duties in Performance Work Plans

For SECs, ASECs, and PECs:

- Attachment 7: Recommended training program
- Attachment 8: A form letter for notifying PSS of new SEC, ASEC, and PEC appointments.

State Environmental Coordinator
Amendment to Position Description

As the State Environmental Coordinator, the incumbent works under the authority of the State Director on environmental issues and has the following responsibilities in accordance with RD Instruction 1940-G, section 1940.307(b):

1. Act as advisor to the State Director on environmental matters and coordinate the requirements of the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
2. Review those Agency actions which are not categorically excluded by the Agency's environmental regulations and which require the approval or clearance of the State office and recommend to the approving official either project approval, disapproval, or modification after analyzing and considering the following:
 - a. Anticipated adverse environmental impacts,
 - b. Anticipated benefits, and
 - c. Action's consistency with the requirements of RD Instruction 1940-G.
3. Represent the State Director at conferences and meetings dealing with environmental matters of a State office nature.
4. Maintain liaison on State office environmental matters with interested public groups and local, State and other Federal agencies.
5. Serve as the State Director's alternate on State-level USDA committees dealing with environmental, land use and historic preservation matters.
6. Solicit, whenever necessary, the expert advice and assistance of other professional staff members within the State office in order to adequately implement the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
7. Provide technical assistance as needed on a project-by-project basis to State and field office staffs.
8. Develop controls for avoiding or mitigating adverse environmental impacts and monitor their implementation.
9. Provide assistance in resolving post-approval environmental matters at the State office level.
10. Maintain records for those actions required by the Agency's environmental regulations.
11. Coordinate for the State Director the development of the State office Natural Resource Management Guide.
12. Provide direction and training to State and field office staff on the requirements of the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
13. Coordinate for the State Director the monitoring of the State office's compliance with the Agency's environmental policies and procedures, and keep the State Director advised of the results of the monitoring process.

State Environmental Coordinator
Incorporating Environmental Duties in Performance Work Plans

Performance Element

If the appointee is full-time or the SEC duties require at least 25% of the appointee's time, SEC responsibilities will be evaluated on the Performance Work Plan, through the use of a generic performance element under part I of the Plan (e.g., Program Management), or through the creation of a unique element in block #13, 14, or 15 of part I. Use of the unique element is preferred. The unique element should be titled "State Environmental Coordinator."

The following language should be used to describe the "Results Achieved" level of performance for the SEC duties under a unique element. The same language should be used as further clarification for a generic element that covers the SEC duties.

Results Achieved:

- Work normally completed to meet critical deadlines.
- Most environmental issues, problems, and concerns are adequately defined and analyzed. Alternatives and mitigation measures developed when impacts to resources are identified. Scope of work and cost estimates reasonably define services to be contracted. Products are understandable, clearly presented, and can typically be accepted by the State Director without modification. On rare occasions there are minor technical errors.
- Analyzes training needs, develops and provides environmental training for the State and field office staff. State Environmental Coordinator typically makes decisions on important environmental issues after consulting with technical experts.
- Advises and represents State Director on environmental matters at meetings of State office nature and solicits expert advice from local, State and other Federal Agencies concerning recommended courses of action in sufficient time for policy decisions and implementation. Serves as the point of contact for the National office on environmental issues. Performs reviews required by the Agency's environmental regulations. Provides technical assistance in a timely manner as needed to State and field office staffs. Maintains required records, including the State Natural Resource Management Guide.

Assistant State Environmental Coordinator
Amendment to Position Description

As the Assistant State Environmental Coordinator, the incumbent works under the general direction and oversight of the State Environmental Coordinator on environmental issues and has the responsibilities listed below. When the State Environmental Coordinator is on scheduled training or leave, the incumbent can act on their behalf and then has the full responsibilities of the State Environmental Coordinator.

1. Act as an aide and advisor to the State Environmental Coordinator on environmental matters and assist in coordinating the requirements of the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
2. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in reviewing Agency actions which are not categorically excluded by the Agency's environmental regulations which require the approval or clearance of the State office and in recommending to the approving official either approval, disapproval, or modification after analyzing and considering the following:
 - a. Anticipated adverse environmental impacts,
 - b. Anticipated benefits, and
 - c. Action's consistency with the requirements of RD Instruction 1940-G.
3. Represent the State Director at conferences and meetings dealing with environmental matters of a State office nature in the absence of the State Environmental Coordinator.
4. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in maintaining liaison on State office environmental matters with interested public groups and local, State and other Federal agencies.
5. Serve as the State Director's alternate on State-level USDA committees dealing with environmental, land use and historic preservation matters in the absence of the State Environmental Coordinator.
6. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in soliciting the expert advice and assistance of other professional staff members within the State office in order to adequately implement the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
7. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in providing technical assistance as needed on a project-by-project basis to State and field office staffs.
8. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in developing controls for avoiding or mitigating adverse environmental impacts and in monitoring their implementation.
9. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in resolving post-approval environmental matters at the State office level.
10. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in maintaining records for those actions required by the Agency's environmental regulations.
11. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in coordinating the development of the State office Natural Resource Management Guide.
12. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in providing direction and training to State and field office staff on the requirements of the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
13. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in monitoring the State office's compliance with the Agency's environmental policies and procedures, and in keeping the State Director advised of the results of the monitoring process.

Assistant State Environmental Coordinator **Incorporating Environmental Duties in Performance Work Plans**

Performance Element

If the ASEC duties require less than 25% of the appointee's time, the ASEC responsibilities will be evaluated on the Performance Work Plan, through the use of a generic performance element under part I of the Plan (e.g., Execution of Duties). If the ASEC duties require 25% or more of the appointee's time, the ASEC responsibilities will be evaluated through the use of a generic performance element under part I or through the creation of a unique element in block #13, 14, or 15 of part I. If the ASEC duties require 25% or more of the appointee's time, use of the unique element is preferred. The unique element should be titled "Assistant State Environmental Coordinator."

The following language should be used to describe the "Results Achieved" level of performance for the ASEC duties under a unique element. The same language should be used as further clarification for a generic element that covers the ASEC duties.

Results Achieved:

- Work normally completed to meet critical deadlines.
- Most environmental issues, problems, and concerns are adequately defined and analyzed. Alternatives and mitigation measures developed when impacts to resources are identified. Scope of work and cost estimates reasonably define services to be contracted. Products are understandable, clearly presented, and can typically be accepted by the State Director without modification. On rare occasions there are minor technical errors.
- Assists the State Environmental Coordinator in analyzing needs and providing training for the State and field office staff. Training materials are typically completed in time for distribution and use at training sessions, meet the training objectives, and are typically accurate with few technical errors or jargon.
- Assists the State Environmental Coordinator in providing advice to the State Director on environmental matters at meetings of State office nature and in soliciting expert advice from State, local, and other Federal agencies concerning recommended courses of action in sufficient time for policy decisions and implementation. Performs reviews required by the Agency's environmental regulations. Provides technical assistance in timely manner as needed to State and field office staffs. Maintains required records.

Program Environmental Coordinator
Amendment to Position Description

As a Program Environmental Coordinator, the incumbent works under the oversight of the State Environmental Coordinator on environmental issues and has the following duties and responsibilities within a specific program area:

1. Act as an aide and advisor to the State Environmental Coordinator on environmental matters and coordinate the requirements of the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
2. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in reviewing Agency actions which are not categorically excluded by the Agency's environmental regulations which require the approval or clearance of the State office and in recommending to the approving official either approval, disapproval, or modification after analyzing and considering the following:
 - a. Anticipated adverse environmental impacts,
 - b. Anticipated benefits, and
 - c. Action's consistency with the requirements of RD Instruction 1940-G.
3. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in maintaining liaison on State office environmental matters with interested public groups and local, State, and Federal agencies.
4. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in soliciting the expert advice and assistance of other professional staff members within the State office in order to adequately implement the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
5. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in providing technical assistance as needed on a project-by-project basis to State and field office staff.
6. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in developing controls for avoiding or mitigating adverse environmental impacts and in monitoring their implementation.
7. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in resolving post-approval environmental matters at the State office level.
8. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in maintaining records for those actions required by the Agency's environmental regulations.
9. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in providing direction and training to State and field office staff on the requirements of the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
10. Assist the State Environmental Coordinator in monitoring the State office's compliance with the Agency's environmental policies and procedures, and in keeping the State Director advised of the results of the monitoring process.

Program Environmental Coordinator
Incorporating Environmental Duties in Performance Work Plans

Performance Element

If the PEC duties require less than 25% of the appointee's time, the PEC responsibilities will be evaluated on the Performance Work Plan, through the use of a generic performance element under part I of the Plan (e.g., Execution of Duties).

The following language should be used as further clarification of the "Results Achieved" level of performance for the PEC duties.

Results Achieved:

- Work normally completed to meet critical deadlines.
- Most environmental issues, problems, and concerns are adequately defined and analyzed with alternatives and mitigation measures developed when impacts to protected resources are identified. Products are understandable, clearly presented, and can typically be concurred in by State Environmental Coordinator with minor modification. There may be occasional and minor technical errors.
- Assists the State Environmental Coordinator in analyzing needs and providing training for the State and field office staff. Training materials are typically completed in time for distribution and use at training sessions, meet the training objectives, and are typically accurate with few technical errors or jargon.
- Performs reviews required by the Agency's environmental regulations. Provides technical assistance in timely manner as needed to State and field office staffs. Maintains required records.

**Recommended Training Program
for Environmental Coordinators**

Recommended for:

State Environmental Coordinator	Items 1-8
Assistant State Environmental Coordinator	Items 1-7
Program Environmental Coordinator	Items 1-4

1. Basic environmental training provided by Program Support Staff.
2. Private sector or other Federal agency training in NEPA application and document preparation and review.
3. "Introduction to Section 106 Review" offered by the University of Nevada and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
4. USDA environmental training courses available on CD-ROM.
5. Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) basic training, including preparing Statements of Work and Independent Government Cost Estimates.
6. Health and Safety Training for Hazardous Waste Operations.
7. Private sector or other Federal agency training on laws relating to and management of hazardous substances.
8. Cross-training with an SEC in another State.

Fax to PSS at (202) 690-4335

TO: Richard A. Davis
Director
Program Support Staff

SUBJECT: Appointment of an Environmental Coordinator

Please be advised that the following individual has been selected to assume the environmental responsibilities as shown

Name: _____

Selected to serve as (*check one*): _____ SEC _____ ASEC _____ PEC

Telephone number: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Present Position : _____ Job Series and Grade: _____

Individual's work experience, education, or course work, that is relevant to the appointment:

Training needs (*refer to Attachment 7 for recommended training*):

State Director

Date: _____